

# Aistear Síolta

Practice Guide



**Information booklet:  
Nurturing young children's physical  
well-being through Fundamental  
Movement Skills (3-6 years)**

## Connections to Aistear and Síolta

### Aistear

**Themes:** Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communicating, Exploring and Thinking

**Guidelines for good practice:** Learning and developing through interactions (pp.27-51); Learning and developing through play (pp.53-70)

### Síolta Standards

1: Rights of the Child, C1.1, 1.2, 1.3

6: Play, C6.3, 6.5, 6.7

9: Health and Welfare, 9.2

Research Digests linked to the above Standards

## Fundamental movement skills

Fundamental movement skills (FMS) support children's overall development especially their co-ordination and physical dexterity. Most importantly, they provide the building blocks for more advanced movements used by children as they become involved in and enjoy a range of different physical activities. In this way, FMS are important for enjoyable and successful participation in physical activities and sport in life. The extent to which young children master these skills in early childhood, depends on the **quality** and **variety** of **opportunities** and **experiences** they have.



FMS can be divided into three categories:

1. **locomotor skills** like crawling, walking, running, galloping, skipping, jumping.
2. **balance skills** like climbing, bending, rolling, turning, stretching, twisting.
3. **manipulation skills** like throwing, catching, kicking and bouncing which are often called 'ball skills'.

Young children benefit from spending significant amounts of time inside and outside everyday having fun moving their bodies and developing different movement skills. Being outdoors also gives them the freedom to explore the natural environment through climbing trees and splashing in puddles, and to experience big movements like running and galloping!

It is important to remember that each child develops at his/her own pace and a child of three years will be at a very different skill level from that of a six-year-old as will a child with particular physical disabilities. Every child needs opportunities to develop and practise FMS to the best of his/her ability and most of the suggested activities in this tip sheet can be adapted to suit children of differing abilities.

Children need lots of opportunities and time to master one FMS. Lots of this practice can happen during child-initiated play. Risky play and play with open-ended materials are especially helpful. Playful, adult-led activities that include modelling and coaching are also important.

Sections 1-3 give suggestions for helping children to develop the three categories of FMS.



## Section 1: Developing LOCOMOTOR skills

### A. Running, running, running...

Provide children with the **time, space and resources** to **run** during child-initiated play.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **running**:

- backwards and forwards.
- following lines/shapes on the ground.
- at different speeds – jogging, running, sprinting.
- to music at different speeds.
- carrying a ball.
- through a ladder drawn on the ground.
- during games like chasing and football.
- on different surfaces such as grass, sand, gravel, paths.
- a distance and throwing a ball for children to catch during or at the end of the run.
- as part of an obstacle course with cones or cardboard boxes to combine running with dodging the obstacle.

### B. Jumping, jumping, jumping...

Provide children with the **time, space and resources** to **jump** during child-initiated play.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **jumping**:

- in puddles.
- over pretend waves in the sea.
- different distances and seeing how many jumps it takes to get from one side of the space to the other.
- over canes or ropes on the ground.
- over low obstacles such as cones or cardboard boxes with bamboos sticks placed across to make a hurdle.
- from a height such as a bench, low wall, sturdy equipment or from a low branch on a tree.
- stretching upwards and reaching as far as they can with their arms.
- in and out of a hula hoop.
- onto and off a mat.
- to music.



## Section 2: Developing BALANCE Skills

### A. Climbing, climbing, climbing...

Provide children with **time, space and resources** to **climb** during child-initiated play.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **climbing**:

- up and down stairs.
- up and down, over and under and along playground equipment.
- up and down and across ladders made of rope.
- up and down large low-hanging trees and branches.
- up and down ramps.
- large rocks.
- using their hands only to move across obstacles, for example, using overhead ladders.

### C. Galloping, galloping, galloping...

Provide children with **time and space** to **gallop** during child-initiated play.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **galloping**:

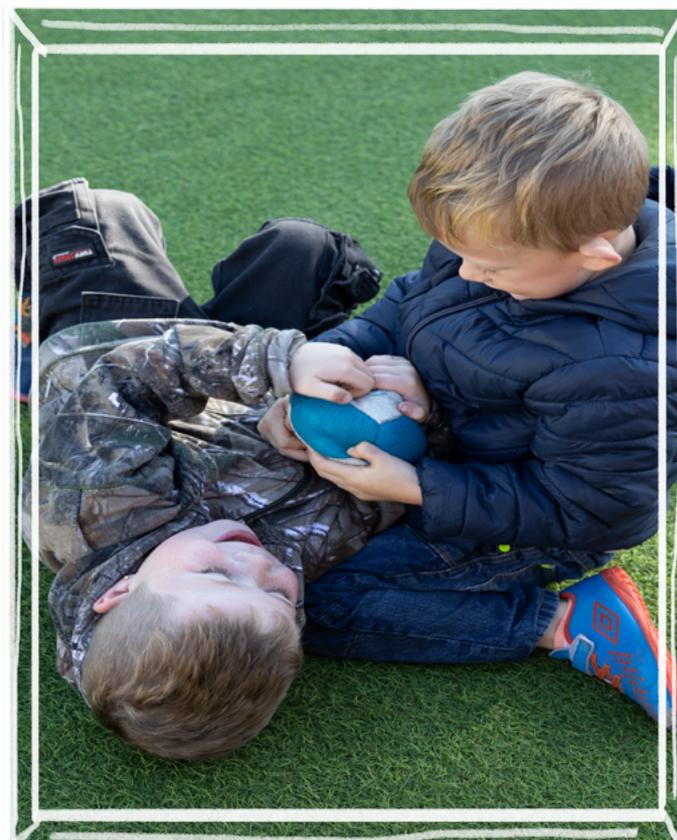
- forward with one foot leading and the other following (alternate feet).
- in a sideways direction.
- with a partner .
- to music.
- games.

### D. Skipping, skipping, skipping...

Provide children with the **time, space and resources** to **skip** during child-initiated play.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **skipping**:

- alone – long skips, high skips, backwards, forwards.
- following lines/shapes on the ground.
- with a partner.
- with a rope.
- games with others.
- actions as part of the game *Simon Says*.



## B. Balancing, balancing, balancing...

Provide children with the **time, space and resources** to **balance** during child-initiated play.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **balancing**:

- while walking on a low beam.
- while walking along low, large tree branches.
- while holding a beanbag on their heads and walking.
- on one foot and picking up a bean bag. Practise using both left and right feet.
- on combinations of different body parts such as two feet and a hand.
- on one foot with eyes closed. Practise using both left and right feet.
- on two feet and placing legs wide to make a bridge. Roll a ball through the bridge.
- on four body parts to make a crab, for example, two hands and two feet. Encourage children to move forward, backwards and sideways!
- using pogo sticks, stilts, roller-skates.



## C. Rocking and rolling, rocking and rolling...

Provide children with the **time, space and resources** to **rock and roll** during child-initiated play.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include:

- rocking on backs by holding the knees to their chest with their hands. Tuck the chin into the chest. Progress to encouraging children to rock back onto their shoulders and forwards to get their feet flat on the ground after each rock.
- rolling with body stretched out like a pencil – arms and legs stretched away.
- forward rolls – tuck up into a small ball, chin into chest, take weight off shoulders and roll on a soft mat or grass.
- rolling on grassy hills and mats in all directions - in a pencil roll, forwards, backwards.





## Section 3: Developing MANIPULATION/BALL skills

### A. Rolling, rolling, rolling...

Provide children with the **time, space and resources** to **roll** things during child-initiated play.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **rolling**:

- balls along a wide tube.
- to knock skittles/plastic bottles filled with sand.

### D. Cycling, cycling, cycling...

Provide children with the **time, space and resources** to **cycle** during child-initiated play.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **cycling**:

- with a variety of tricycles, bicycles, balance bikes, scooters and go-carts.
- around an obstacle course made of boxes or cones.
- following lines drawn on the ground.

### B. Throwing and catching, throwing and catching, throwing and catching...

Provide children with the **time, space and resources** to **throw and catch** during child-initiated play.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **throwing and catching**:

- using large soft balls and progressing to smaller balls.
- throwing for distance – provide targets to encourage children to throw further.
- throwing for accuracy. Provide targets for the children to throw at.
- combining running, throwing and catching. For example, encourage children to gently roll a ball forwards into a space, run around in front of it, bend knees and pick up the ball, bring close to the chest. Repeat.
- different objects to a partner, for example, a beanbag, ball, a *Frisbee*, a boomerang.



## C. Kicking, dribbling, passing and bouncing, kicking, dribbling, passing and bouncing, kicking, dribbling, passing and bouncing...

Provide children with the **time, space** and **resources** to **kick, dribble, pass and bounce** during child-initiated play.



Ideas for adult-led activities might include **kicking**:

- large soft stationary balls and progressing to moving smaller balls along the ground. Encourage kicking for distance using right and left feet.
- a stationary ball towards a target.
- and stopping/trapping a moving ball. Encourage children to use both feet.
- the ball with the inside and outside of the foot.
- the ball with the laces or the instep to encourage height in the ball.
- a moving ball at a target such as between cones. Make cones wide initially.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **bouncing**:

- and catching a large ball with two hands.
- bouncing the ball with one hand.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **dribbling**:

- by kicking and controlling the ball with small movements. Encourage children to use their right and left feet and as they improve, to alternate between left and right.
- between cones in a zig-zag when confident to progress. Encourage children to use both feet.
- faster.

Ideas for adult-led activities might include **passing**:

- a ball in pairs – encourage children to use different size and shape balls.
- hitting a ball off a wall using feet or hands.
- using two-hands to strike with a bat that has a short handle and a large face/paddle. When learning to strike stationary balls, it can help to place them at height, for example, from a foam cylinder or cone. Progress from striking a stationary ball to a moving ball.
- with one hand holding a racket starting with a stationary ball and then to a moving ball. Again move from large to small balls. The shorter the handle, the easier it is to strike.
- using a light hockey stick, child's golf stick or children's hurley.
- playing swing ball by striking a ball that is attached to a string or rope and hooked to the ground.

